

As a member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I was privileged to have served on the TEA-21 conference committee. I am proud to have fought for the language which increased the presence of local rural officials in the transportation and planning process. This is good for rural America and it is good for transportation.

However, challenges abound in rural areas. The needs still greatly outpace Federal, State, and local resources. I would like to just give a few examples.

One in every 14 households in rural America is without a vehicle, despite being the most prevalent mode of transportation. Nearly 38 percent of county roads are inadequate for current travel, and nearly half of major rural bridges are structurally deficient.

This is significant, as 81 percent or 3.1 million miles of the Nation's public highway system exist in rural America.

While still an important mode of transportation, inner city bus service has almost completely disappeared off the face of rural America. In 1965, 23,000 communities were linked together with daily bus service. As we start the new century, that number has dwindled to a mere 4,500, from 23,000 down to 4,500. Those are communities with rural routes. Too often the rural routes are the ones that are eliminated.

This decline has implications, not only for passenger service, but also for essential freight services, as intercity buses often provide the only daily package express service in remote rural communities.

Public transit is becoming a vital source of transportation in rural areas, especially as disabled and elderly populations rise. Yet, 38 percent of rural residents live in an area without any form of public transportation. This can be directly linked to the fact that less than 10 percent of Federal spending for public transportation goes to rural communities.

Air service is often seen as an essential factor in attracting and retaining businesses in rural communities, but the high cost of subsidizing service limits its availability. On this, the eve of the day when Congress is scheduled to take up the Aviation Investment and Reform Act, or known as AIR-21, the conference report, a bill which will reauthorize and increase funding for Federal aviation programs, as well as provide improved passenger service to rural areas, on this eve, I wish to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) and the rest of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure who, on a bipartisan basis, have recognized the needs of rural America when it comes to aviation.

TEA-21 does help ensure rural elected officials and communities are represented in the planning process, which is best described as the gateway for accessing Federal transportation funds.

This will help States develop comprehensive plans that use our limited resources most wisely, as well as contribute to the economic and social growth of rural areas.

Even with the new TEA-21 provisions, however, rural elected officials are still on an uneven playing field with urban and state officials. That is why members of groups like the National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, National Association of Development Organizations and the American Public Works Association continue to advocate federal legislation that closes the equity gap in planning and programming.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, transportation is an essential component of addressing the needs of rural America. It not only connects people to jobs, health care and family in a way that enhances one's quality of life, but it also serves as the lifeline of the rural and national economies. I look forward to serving with the other members of the Congressional Rural Caucus and to bettering the lives of those we serve.

I just want to pay tribute to the rural caucus, who is going to absolutely make life better across rural America by their bipartisan effort.

---

#### REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1000, WENDELL H. FORD AVIATION INVESTMENT AND REFORM ACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Mr. REYNOLDS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-523) on the resolution (H. Res. 438) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 1000) to amend title 49, United States Code, to reauthorize programs of the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

---

#### REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3843, SMALL BUSINESS RE-AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2000

Mr. REYNOLDS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-524) on the resolution (H. Res. 439) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3843) to reauthorize programs to assist small business concerns, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

---

#### ISSUES CONCERNING RURAL AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I, too, wish to commend those who provided

the leadership in the House of establishing the Congressional Rural Caucus. As a member of that caucus, I am enthusiastic about the work before us and the goals that we propose to undertake.

The kick-off of that caucus is an exciting time and I think an important realization that rural issues need some help here in the United States Congress. There seem to be fewer and fewer of us who represent rural communities, and our goal and our charge over the rest of this Congress and on into the future years involves elevating the priority of rural issues in the Congress. I am excited to be part of that.

Sixty-two million Americans live in rural America. That is one out of every four people. We should not be leaving 25 percent of our citizens out of the economic prosperity we are enjoying generally as a Nation today.

In the Fourth Congressional District of Colorado, it is a largely rural area and depends heavily on agriculture. The fragile support system of small towns scattered throughout the region depends on the bounty of our natural resources. The tax base in small cities and counties in Colorado and all over rural America is usually small and less flexible than in larger cities in suburban areas. With such small populations, tax bases rarely grow, and increased taxes have a much greater impact on the individual property owner.

Residents of these areas cannot afford tax increases to support the needs of their small communities, so local governments have to make do with what they have. They cannot afford to compensate for an ever-changing Federal role with respect to an overregulatory propensity here in Washington. The Federal government and Congress must allow these people to raise the resources they need, and we should spend less of our time regulating every last penny out of them.

All too often Federal agencies propose regulations without keeping in mind these rural communities. These communities, I submit, cannot afford to comply with too many more new rules and regulations.

One of the biggest offenders in the overregulating of rural America is the Fish and Wildlife Service, through the Endangered Species Act. Regulations involving sensitive animals and plants can clean out just about any small town's economy if the species in question happens to be in a community.

Rural communities, like those in my district, are often supported by agriculture. Agriculture is not benefiting from the economic prosperity that the rest of the country is currently experiencing. They are suffering even more thanks to the Endangered Species Act.

My district contains the short grass prairie ecosystem that attracts many small critters, such as the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse, the black-

tailed prairie dogs, the mountain plover, as well as their predators, and a handful of other species that the government has determined to be threatened or endangered.

If one ran into a rare mineral on his land, his property value might increase overnight, but find an endangered species on your property, if that species decides to take up residence on your land, your property value will sink, because the Fish and Wildlife Service now determines what you do with your land, and any value received from production is subsequently lost.

While many homeowners in our country do not have to worry about a Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse or a mountain plover, a rural American, or more specifically a farmer, can see these little animals ruin their livelihood and take away much of their rights as landowners.

Often their losses are not even helpful in recovering the species. Out of thousands of Endangered Species Act listings, approximately 22 species have been delisted since 1973. Seven of those were due to extinction, eight of them due to data error, and only seven have actually been helped by the Endangered Species Act. That is less than 1 percent.

Private landowners, I believe, are the best stewards of their land. They are often willing to set aside a portion of their land to help preserve these valuable species. In fact, private landowners are the most responsible and most helpful for endangered and threatened species recovery, more so, I say, than the government is.

Unfortunately, farmers are often punished for voluntarily creating habitat suitable for these declining species by unknowingly giving the Fish and Wildlife Service a right of passage onto their land to monitor species recovery. Farmers and ranchers are often told what they can and cannot do with all of their land. That sometimes means they cannot produce the products that constitute the basis for their income.

□ 1930

The Endangered Species Act is not only invasive, but it impacts disproportionately rural America. This law and the regulations that come with it often eliminate the only income that rural communities have.

In Colorado, here is an interesting example, Mr. Speaker, four fish which are found mostly in the rural part of my State, include two types of Chub, the squawfish and the sucker, are being protected with a budget of \$60 million. However, the economic impact of this recovery is \$650 million. Meanwhile, over in the State of Washington, anglers are paid a \$3 bounty for every squawfish caught measuring over 11 inches in their rivers.

The Endangered Species Act needs to be reformed, Mr. Speaker. It is just one

more example of the kinds of issues that the rural caucus intends to focus on in our efforts to reach out to rural America and elevate the prominence of rural issues on the floor of the House.

ESA affects all aspects of Rural America:

Road building—Rural communities typically have inferior transportation systems to begin with. The ESA doesn't help a community build a much needed road that may bring more commerce to the area. They must check first to see if they are invading on any endangered or threatened species' territory or they could face litigation or government fines. These delays can be both costly and devastating to a community that needs the business to survive.

Water use—Rural Communities tend to rely on less sophisticated systems to provide water for their communities. Unfortunately, these systems often rely on what is seen as potential habitat for endangered or threatened species. Towns often have to spend millions of dollars to divert water or create new systems to avoid impact to a species.

Construction in general—when a rural community wants to build a new hospital, school or maybe even a new store to bring some revenue to the area, they frequently face road blocks because the only land they have might be the preferred habitat of a species that may not even be living in the area.

Tax base—small towns may have to spend their small tax base to defend themselves from Environmental groups, or on costly modifications to their infrastructure, because of a species that may or not be in their community and, in some cases, may not actually be endangered or even exist.

When the Fish and Wildlife Service considers a listing in Rural America, the economic consequences are brought to their attention, but they often place the lowest priority on the communities they devastate.

While the Mountain Plover was being evaluated for listing, the government suggested if the plover was listed, farmers would have to cease normal farming practices from late April to mid-May because this coincides with the plover's nesting season. For a farmer in the Eastern Plains, this would be devastating because this is the only time of the year for planting most crops. USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service wrote that the plover's listing "may adversely impact a number of common agriculture practices in the short-grass prairie region in the United States." In already difficult times for farmers in America, the elimination of their planting season would cause extinction of the Rural Farmer in the eastern plains.

Farmers are often fined for continuing farming activities on their property, even if the species is not known to exist on their land, but just because their land might be potential habitat for an animal the government is concerned about.

The bottom line:

Federal agencies should not create mandates that will financially devastate entire communities.

Rural America is already burdened because they face various economic disadvantages.

Rural Americans cannot bear the burden of species recovery.

The government should take into consideration the economic consequences to already strained Rural Americans, and work with the communities, not against them.

#### ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL OCEAN DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution in support of establishing a National Ocean Day.

A National Ocean Day would help to focus the public's attention on the vital role the ocean plays in the lives of our nation's people and the significant impact our people have on the health of this vital resource.

The ocean covers 71 percent of the Earth's surface and is key to the life support systems of all creatures on this planet. It contains a wondrous abundance and diversity of life—from the smallest microorganism to the blue whale. The potential of the ocean's tremendous resources are not yet fully explored and likely includes life-saving medicines and treatments.

Two-thirds of the world's people live within 50 miles of a coast and one out of six American jobs is in fishing, shipping, or tourism. Some 90 percent of the world's trade is transported on the oceans.

The health of our ocean ecosystems are threatened by global warming, pollution, overfishing, and the destruction of coral reefs. We must take steps today to protect this irreplaceable resource.

The State of Hawaii has designated the first Wednesday of June as Ocean Day in recognition of the significant role the ocean plays in the lives of Hawaii's people, culture, history, and traditions. I hope my colleagues will join me in calling for a National Ocean Day to help focus nationwide attention on the need for responsible stewardship of this precious resource.

#### POWS AND MIAS IN VIETNAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, back in 1993 I met a gentleman named Binh Ly. And Mr. Ly told me and other Congressmen that he had a business partner, Mr. Nguyen Van Hao, who met with former Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown to seek his help in normalizing relations with Vietnam.

Mr. Ly said that Mr. Hao who met with Ron Brown three or four times told him that Ron Brown wanted \$700,000 in up-front money to start the normalization process with Vietnam. Mr. Brown said initially that he never met with Mr. Hoa, but later, it was found out that he did indeed meet with him three times.

The FBI, on October 2 of 1992, was reported in the New York Times to have discovered evidence that the Vietnamese government was preparing to